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ABSTRACT

The ethnographic study investigated the implementation practices of a bilingual education program. A school site containing factors which were determined to be prevalent across Title VII programs was selected from over 300 Title VII sites. In addition, the school also contained a local student population, i.e., no one was bused from elsewhere; two bilingual teachers in the program, representing a higher percentage of bilingual capacity among the teaching staff than was generally true in other bilingual programs; a program being implemented at two different grade and age levels (K-3 and 4-6); and instructional aides representing the most qualified group of paraprofessionals in the school district. Most of the students were Chicano. The non-teaching staff reflected the ethnic composition present among the student population. However, the teaching staff was predominantly composed of Anglos with a few Chicano and Black teachers. Three classrooms within the school were observed for a period of three weeks. Interview data and relevant documents were also used in the analysis. It was found that the prevalent structure of teaching and the organization of tasks within the classroom determined the implementation practices. Teachers retained their dominant and traditional role. Instructional aides translated traditional subject matter, taught the native language, and enforced the behavioral norms. (Author/NQ)

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IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study investigates the implementation practices of a bilingual education program. It is found that the prevalent structure of teaching and the organization of tasks within the classroom determine the implementation practices. Teachers retain their dominant and traditional role. Instructional aides translate traditional subject matter, teach the native language, and enforce the behavioral norms.

Implementation Practices of Bilingual Education Programs

During the past decade renewed interest in bilingual education programs has increased both financial and educational efforts. For example, the ESEA Title VII Bilingual Education Act (hereafter referred to as Title VII) has been a special program designed to remediate educational problems confronted by bilingual students. At the same time, bilingual education research efforts have expanded. Historically, the research has focused on relating bilingualism to intelligence and achievement. More recently, studies have looked at the effects of bilingual instruction upon achievement. Very few researchers have investigated the implementation practices of bilingual education. This paper reports on the implementation practices of a bilingual education program within a classroom setting.

The implementation process is analyzed by applying Lortie's (1975: 123) notions of the structure of teaching and organization of tasks coupled with the professional/non-professional status of the two principal actors. This theoretical framework sets out to explain the implementation practices of a particular bilingual education program.

Methodology

After collecting survey data from over 300 Title VII sites (Ortiz, 1975), a school site was selected which contained factors which were determined to be prevalent across Title VII programs. Ethnographic research methods were,

then, employed to determine the implementation practices of Title VII programs in a particular site. Three weeks were spent observing three classrooms within a school which in addition to the general characteristics prevalent across all other sites, contained the following: 1) the student population at the school was local, i.e., no one was bused from elsewhere; 2) there were two bilingual teachers in the program which represented a higher percentage of bilingual capacity among the teaching staff than was generally true in other bilingual programs; 3) the program was being implemented at two different grade and age levels- kindergarten through third and fourth through sixth grades; and 4) the instructional aides represented the most qualified group of paraprofessionals in the school district. The presence of the above mentioned characteristics was presumed to positively affect the implementation practices.

Interview data and rvelant documents were also used in deriving the analysis presented.

Related Research

Bilingual education has received some research attention. However, even though concerns of education for non-English speaking populations have received national political prominence, "the literature of research is almost devoid of extended studies of the educational problems of Mexican-American children" (Weinberg, 1977:285). In fact, the most extensive review regarding Mexican-American school related problems is that produced by the U. S. Commission of Civil Rights (1970-1971a; 1971b; 1972a; 1972b; 1973; 1974). Weinberg (1977) asserts that one reason research dealing with the Spanish speaking is limited is because there has been a pronounced tendency to reduce school problems of the Spanish-speaking to defective values held by that population. He states,

"A study of values cannot substitute for an empirical examination of the actual conditions under which children learn or do not learn" (285).

The presen. study attempts to analyze the implementation practices of a bilingual education program. Even though the analysis is limited to the classroom level, the theoretical concepts which are applied are expected to contribute to a generalized explanation of the implementation practices at the classroom level programs.

Background

Bilingual Education School is located in an urban city with a population of about 150,000. It is part of a western school district in which Title VII had been in existence for just over a year. During the time of observation there were twelve instructional aides, twelve teachers and three resource specialists distributed among six schools directed by the Title VII director. The budget for the program was approximately $250,000.00.

Most of the students were Chicano. The non-teaching staff within the school reflected the ethnic composition present among the student population. The teaching staff, however was predominantly composed of Anglos with a few Chicano and Black teachers.

Professional and Non-professional Status

The present study indicates that instruction within the bilingual education classrooms was carried out by the classroom teachers and instructional aides. The classroom teachers were certified by the state as qualified to provide professional educational services. Two Chicano, one Anglo and one Black teachers composed the Title VII program professional teaching group. The two Chicana teachers were non-tenured, one having taught two years and the other

being a first year teacher. The other two teachers were tenured having taught over five years.

The instructional aides were Chicana female with the exception of a Black originally from Panama. They did not hold state teaching certificates, nor were they holding a position with eventual tenure.

The differences cited above between the two principal actors in the implementation of Title VII at the classroom level enabled them to develop a lasting working relationship. Smith & Keith (1971) found that two factors contributed to lasting relationships in a professional setting: 1) common work orientation among the participants, i.e., both were child or program oriented; and 2) distinct authority structure, i.e., one of the participants was clearly superior to the other in some way. In this instance, the teacher and instructional aide can be said to have shared a common work orientation, i.e., both were child oriented. Additionally, one of the participants was professional and tenured, or with the possibility of being tenured, while the other was non-professional with no possibility of being tenured. This difference provided a distinct authority structure with the teacher holding the superior role. These two factors provided the conditions necessary for a lasting working relationship between them.

A description of how the day began illustrates the structure which was established. The school day for the instructional personnel began with the preliminary arrangement of materials and equipment on tables before the children lined up outside the classroom doors in rows consisting of boys and girls. The teachers remained at their desks as the instructional aides escorted the students into the classroom.

The established relationship between the two principal actors also

served to further determine the structure of teaching and the organization of tasks for each of them.

The Structure of Teaching

Having established the relationship between the two principal actors, an analysis of the structure of teaching and the organization of tasks for each of them is in order. The implementation of the Title VII program at the particular site under investigation took three forms. Given this, it was expected that the structure of teaching would be affected according to the form. A description of the first form follows.

Two instructional aides and two classroom teachers were combined into team teaching. They were responsible for the kindergarten through third grades located within two classrooms. The structure of the student population consisted of permament small groups which were predetermined by the teachers. The location and content of instruction were also predetermined by the teacher. Due to the small group student structure and the presence of aides and teachers, movement between the classrooms was patterned. For example, the classroom in which the bilingual teacher was housed tended to be used by the instructional aides to a greater degree but movement between the two classrooms was constant. The children moved to the instructional aide or teacher depending upon the school activity which was being conducted. The instructional aides likewise moved from table to table within classrooms and between classrooms. The bilingual teacher rarely moved outside her classroom. The Anglo teacher was never observed teaching or conducting other instructional activities outside her classroom.

The result of this arrangement of activities provided that all children

would eventually have contact with both instructional aides and teachers. This contributed to familiarity among the teaching personnel regarding the students' progress in their activities. This structure also imposed the activities in English upon one of the teachers, English and some Spanish activities upon the bilingual teacher and most of the activities in Spanish upon the instructional aides.

The fourth through sixth grade classrooms were organized so that each instructional aide worked with the teacher to whom she was assigned. One of the teachers was a Chicana commencing her teaching career. With the exception of two lessons in Spanish she was observed teaching all other classes in English.

The students were organized in permanent small groups. These groups were, then, instructed by the teacher and teacher aide within that structure. For example, the aide remained in one location of the room throughout the school day. She was observed outside of that location only on those occasions in which the children were absent from the classroom. The students, then, went to her in small groups for instruction. The instruction took several forms: she taught Spanish, she provided tutorial services, and aided in enforcing the behavioral norms imposed by the teacher. The aide's localized interaction with the students differed from the teacher's access to the total classroom from which the instructional activities were conducted.

The third arrangement consisted of the instructional aide and teacher who began each day with the same activity. Upon entering the room after the bell rang in the morning, the children recited the flag salute in unison in both English and Spanish. The teacher would call upon a student to lead the class in English. Having done so, the instructional aide would also call

upon a student to lead the class in Spanish. This was followed by drills in which the teacher provided the English content and the instructional aide provided the Spanish counterpart. During the drill the teacher stood behind her desk and the instructional aide stood either behind her desk which was placed beside the teacher's desk or by the charts which were being used along with the drills.

After the drill the class members assembled into permanent small groups. The children worked in their respective exercises. In the case of a non-English speaking student, the teacher sitting next to him at his seat would provide extra drill with English words. He would then move to the instructional aide for additional help in Spanish. After the class had settled in its activities, the aide would help some child individually, or work at her desk. All instructional activities were initiated by the teacher in English, countered by the aide in Spanish. The socialization process was likewise determined by the teacher's dominance in the classroom. The children who had difficulty understanding the proper behavioral norms were first reprimanded in English by the teacher, and afterwards in Spanish by the instructional aide. In brief, the structure of teaching accentuated the teacher's dominance.

To summarize, in all cases, the classroom teacher retained control over the content of the traditional subject areas. This was done by teaching the traditional subject areas in English. To illustrate the potency of the structure of teaching, an observation of those teachers who were bilingual revealed that they likewise taught the traditional courses in English. On occasion they would present translated versions of the traditional subject area content. More often, however, the bilingual teachers taught Spanish. The teacher, then, was responsible for initiating, directing, and planning the

instructional activities. When necessary she altered the schedule. As is evident, the dominance of the teacher and the structure of teaching were preserved.

The Organization of Tasks

Lortie (1975:123) reports that most teachers spend most of their time working alone with a group of students in a bounded area. This cellular organization contributes to conservative curricular thinking, preoccupation with the present, and individualism. Historically, the modes of instruction (lecturing, recitation, demonstration, tutoring, seat work, and small group instruction) have remained constant. Also, there is evidence of an absence of any important gains in teacher productivity in similar teacher-student ratios; teachers do not claim that they can now teach more in less time. Would the addition of a new program alter the above description?

A review of the tasks which were conducted by the teachers and instructional aides is in order. As was stated earlier, the teacher instructed in English all of the traditional subjects. She also taught skills associated with mastering the English language: reading, writing, and reciting in English. She was also responsible for imposing the behavioral norms within the classroom. She initiated all activities, established rules and regulations, certified attendance and other such details, and verified the actualization of instruction within her classroom. Her signature in the numerous forms crossing her desk testified to the formality and superiority of her task responsibilities.

The instructional aide had her tasks allocated on the basis of her knowledge of the Spanish language. She engaged in the following activities:

teaching the Spanish language, i.e., reading, speaking and writing Spanish; translating and explaining the subject area content which had been previously presented in English; and helping the student understand the daily demands within the classroom. The content and sequence of the Spanish instruction was decided upon by one of the Chicano teachers and aides. They planned the general program during their weekly meeting, but changes, additions, and deletions were common on a daily basis. Thus, except for one case, the responsibility for teaching in Spanish and for teaching Spanish rested upon the instructional aides. If problems arose, they could be presented for discussion at one of the workshops or supervisors could be called to come to the classroom to demonstrate and help. In-service sessions for instructional aides were also provided in which techniques, methods, materials and strategies for teaching Spanish were presented. This strategy served to preserve the structure of teaching for the teacher and aide. By permitting aides to go outside of the classroom for help, the organization of tasks for the aides remained clear.

The instructional aide also served to help and support the students as they engaged in the daily school activities. They were expected to transmit the school's behavioral norms by employing the native language. The subordinate status of the aide served to insure that the teacher's expectations regarding behavioral norms were fulfilled by all of the participants within the classroom.

It has been seen how the organization of tasks was determined by the language and status differences between the two principal participants. A description of the manner by which the teaching/learning process was carried out by the instructional aides will illustrate this point. The Chicano

student was taught material in English and was then separated from the others in order to receive a translated lesson of the same material. Later, the aide would help the student complete the exercises which followed the lesson. Also, after all students had had a lesson in Spanish, the Chicano student would again be separated from the others and the aide would help him complete the exercises. If the Chicano student misbehaved or deviated in some way from the behavioral expectations, the teacher would reprimand the student in English. This admonition would be immediately followed by a reprimand in Spanish by the aide. Inherent in the above practice was the expectation that instructional aides by their presence and explanations would infuse the school's norms upon the bilingual student. The relationship which was developed between the teacher and aide reflected a reliance upon the aide for insuring the student's assumption of the educational institution's values such as promptness, tidiness, and goodness.

Conclusions

In summary, even though the forms in which the implementation activities of the bilingual program were carried out differed, the basic mode for implementing the program remained uniform within the three classrooms. Title VII was primarily implemented at the classroom level through the functions the instructional aide fulfilled. This was largely due to the utilization of the native language within the instructional setting. The instructional aides taught Spanish, translated, and provided support in the content areas. The teachers taught the traditional courses: two teachers taught exclusively in English and the others rarely in both Spanish and English.

The implications regarding the implementation practices of bilingual

education programs are worth considering. First, the education of students perceived to have learning problems is placed in the hands of paraprofessionals rather than specialists as is true in some other programs such as special education. Second, the division of labor which is determined for the instructional aide is due to language emphasis. Third, the structure of teaching and the organization of tasks within the classroom are the determinants of the implementation practices of bilingual education programs. The critical issue in the implementation process is the preservation of the traditional teaching characteristics. Therefore, the classroom teachers retain responsibility for teaching the traditional subjects in English and for establishing the behavioral norms. The instructional aides assume those tasks which insure that disruption of the structure of teaching and the organization of tasks does not occur.

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